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## Article

# 'Just Knocking out Pills'

## An Ethnography of British Drug Dealers in Ibiza

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**Background** Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with British seasonal workers and tourists, this paper provides an extensive overview of the methodological processes of researching drug users and drug dealers within the international nightlife resort of Ibiza. In an innovative application of Bryman's (2004) *Disneyization* framework, it is argued that seasonal workers are engaged in a deep form of *performative labour*. As mediators of Ibiza's hedonistic atmosphere, this social group are revealed to be deeply immersed in the island's renowned drug market.

**Methods** Ethnographic fieldwork employing a grounded theory design was undertaken over three summers in tourist locations across Ibiza, including: nightclubs, bars and cafes, beaches, airports, and hotels. Field notes from participant observation were supplemented with data from semi-structured interviews (n=56). Documentary photography was also employed, with 580 images taken during fieldwork.

**Results and Conclusion** Many British seasonal workers in Ibiza are rapidly enmeshed within the drug market associated with the island's hedonistic nightlife. Participants in this study were invariably engaged in high levels of illicit drug use, and unlike their tourist counterparts, this was drawn out over several months. As a consequence of the fragile nature of employment within the legal economy, many seasonal workers in Ibiza rely on income from drug dealing. In a social context where drug use is woven into the consumer space, it seems the multiple risks associated with the drug trade are obfuscated. The paper demonstrates that ethnographic immersion within bounded play spaces is essential if researchers are to generate theoretical insight into the complex intersections between illicit drug use, dealing and social context.

**Key Words** drug use, drug dealing, performative labour, nightlife tourism, Ibiza

As the global epicentre of electronic dance music, the Balearic island of Ibiza has an enduring reputation as a carnivalesque space themed around narratives of sex, drugs, alcohol and hedonistic excess (Turner 2018). Survey research has been invaluable in documenting how regular patterns of drug use can be dramatically transformed within the party spaces of the island (Bellis et al 2009), while a small band of ethnographers have sought to add depth to quantitative data by exploring the psycho-social and cultural worlds of those involved (Briggs 2013; Bhardwa 2013; Tutenges 2013). This paper draws on ethnographic research, conducted over three summers, with British tourists and seasonal workers in Ibiza. The study focuses on the socio-cultural processes and situated meaning of drug use and drug dealing from the perspective of those acting



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within the infamous party zones of the island. The aim of the paper is twofold. Firstly, it provides an insight into some of the methodological processes and associated challenges of conducting ethnographic research with illicit drug users and drug dealers acting in chaotic spaces associated with event tourism and the night-time economy. Secondly, some of the key findings of the study are outlined, with Bryman's influential *Disneyization* framework employed to theorise seasonal workers' immersion in Ibiza's drug scene as a form of deep *performative labour* (Bryman 2004). It is argued that for many seasonal workers, the transition to drug dealing can be partially explained by the widespread ambivalence (and complicity) of door security and police in Ibiza, as they engage in a *performance of control* that enables the drug market to flourish.

## Methodology

### Research Philosophy: Interpretivism and the Influence of Cultural Criminology

This research was grounded within an interpretivist research philosophy, an ontological position that assumes the nature of reality to be socially constructed *between* individuals through dynamic social interaction (Robson 2002). The focus was therefore on developing an empathetic understanding of the psychosocial and cultural meaning of illicit drugs *in-situ* from the perspective of those involved. This is important, as research in this field often overlooks both the *meaning* and *social context* of drug use (Hunt, Moloney and Evans 2010, 18). The research was underpinned by cultural criminology. This is a theoretical, methodological and interventionist approach to the study of crime that focuses on 'the continuous generation of meaning around interaction; rules created, rules broken, a constant interplay of moral entrepreneurship, political innovation and transgression' (Hayward 2008, 119). This research aimed to contribute to a limited evidence base that foregrounds the lived experience of the often-silenced voice of the 'other' (Ferrell and Van de Vorde 2012) through the employment of a methodology rooted in constructivist grounded theory and ethnography.

### Research Approach: Constructivist Grounded Theory and Ethnography

Grounded theory is an inductive method used to build theory about social issues from the ground up (Charmaz 2006). Several models of grounded theory have been developed to reflect the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher (Mills, Bonner and Francis 2006, 3). This study employed *constructivist grounded theory* as this rejects the notion of objective reality and recognises the interpretivist role of the researcher. As is required within constructivist grounded theory, a brief review of the literature was undertaken prior to fieldwork (Charmaz 2008).

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in Ibiza over three summers, reflecting a rich history of criminological scholarship that has documented the lived experience of drug users and dealers. Examples include *Portraits from a Shooting Gallery* (Fiddle 1967); *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (Bourgois 1995) and more recently, *Dead-End Lives* (Briggs and Monge Gamero 2017). Cultural criminologists argue that 'instant ethnography' can capture moments of chaos, confusion and 'flashes of fear and transgression' that punctuate the social world (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2015, 218). It is these flashes of transgression that I hoped to capture during fieldwork in Ibiza, with observations supplemented with documentary photography and ethnographic interviews to attain a deep understanding of the social meaning of drug use and dealing

amongst British seasonal workers and tourists. In embracing such ethnographic fieldwork, the aim was to ‘become part of the process by which meaning is made’ and develop an understanding of the ways in which people make sense of their experiences (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2015, 211).

#### Access: From Initial Contact to Acceptance

Fieldwork was conducted in a range of tourist spaces including: beaches, airports, hotel pool areas, cafes and restaurants, bars and nightclubs. Theoretical sampling enabled the development of conceptual insights ‘grounded’ in the data, with emerging concepts guiding *who* and *where* to sample next (Breckenridge and Jones 2009, 113). The gatekeeper (an events promoter recruited from my own social network) proved to be an essential conduit within field work, attaining guest list access for club venues and some VIP areas (*see* Hayward and Turner 2019, for analysis of Ibiza’s faux-VIP culture). These locations would have been otherwise inaccessible due to the high entrance fees. Indeed, the essential role of the gatekeeper was demonstrated within our first hour of arriving on the island.

After checking into the hotel at midnight, we decide to go to a bar affiliated to a well-known club brand. An hour later, Paul has worked his magic. We’ve been invited to the owner’s villa and we’re on the guest list for tomorrow (Tim Turner, fieldnotes).

While the gatekeeper was essential in establishing preliminary points of access, it was important to establish a deeper level of contact with participants. As fieldwork progressed, I began to feel increasingly embedded in the environment, particularly as relationships were formed with the close-knit group of British seasonal workers employed in roles across the night-time economy. In fact, the longer I spent in the field, the more I felt part of the worker community, distinct from tourists. Acceptance by this group seemed to spread amongst workers and conferred credibility amongst participants.

Caught in an afternoon storm, we sit outside a bar under the cover of a canopy. We chat to a group of three male, British bar workers sat drinking at the next table. After an hour of good-humoured conversation, we tell them about the research. They’ve already heard about us – ‘ah *you’re* the “researchers” [in finger quote marks, laughing], you need to fucking interview us!’ – We meet up with them several times in the next few days and they invite us out for drinks on our last night.

This amused reaction to the research was not uncommon, with participants often marvelling that we were ‘getting paid to go on holiday’. While this playful scepticism felt frustrating at times, it was important to read and adapt to the dynamics of the environment and roll with the good-natured teasing. Individual personality and a relaxed demeanour were therefore essential to establishing acceptance amongst participants.

I meet Ben in a West End bar at 3am. Him and a couple of friends come over and start calling me 'Eyeball Paul' (DJ character in the film *Kevin and Perry Go Large*). I play along with the joke and we chat amiably for the next few hours as they pass a pouch of ketamine between them. We leave there at 6am, swap numbers and they agree to meet later that day for an interview.

This close proximity to illicit drug use was an inevitable aspect of the fieldwork, despite this I never felt any significant pressure from participants to take part. They seemed to accept my presence, while simultaneously recognising my role as a researcher. On other occasions, adapting to the context meant reassuring participants when they felt uneasy about discussing sensitive issues. Much media attention has been directed at Ibiza, with well-rehearsed narratives of wild youth on the rampage. This meant that many participants were initially sceptical of our motives, assuming us to be either undercover journalists or police. As the excerpt below demonstrates, this meant that acceptance was not immutable and required traversing a delicate line between curiosity and intrusiveness.

After a long night working the bar, Sam sits with me in a café and tells me stories of his time on the island. Then, from nowhere, he pauses mid-sentence, head in hands - 'You are *really* a researcher, aren't you? Promise me you're not a journalist.' I reassure him and he regains composure, explaining how a tabloid hack duped him last summer, splashing his photo across a British newspaper (Tim Turner, fieldnotes).

*Immersion* represents a deeper level of access, where my role as researcher moved beyond observation and I became *part of the story*. As Jock Young asserts, what criminology needs is 'an ethnographic method that can deal with reflexivity, contradiction, tentativeness, change of opinion, posturing and concealment' (Young 2004, 26). The fieldnote below reflects this sentiment and shows how immersion, while fraught with ethical dilemmas, reveals the kind of 'dirty knowledge' (Ferrell 1997) that is necessary to enhance criminological understanding.

Our guides for the night lead us to a busy bar and shout orders to the waitress. Jugs of some lurid cocktail are dropped on the table. Sean, the same man who had earlier insisted that he had 'no interest in drugs,' has been dabbing at a pouch of MDMA throughout the night and offers it liberally to anyone in his vicinity. Time accelerates and night descends into blurred disorientation. Eventually, the group tips out of the bar into the stark daylight of 6am and everyone heads for breakfast (Tim Turner, fieldnotes).

### Data Collection Method 1: Observation and Participation

Three types of observation were employed during fieldwork. Firstly, periods of *unobtrusive observation* were undertaken at various points throughout the 24-hour period. This involved observing interactions as they unfolded. The busy, often chaotic, nature of the social setting made it easy to undertake observation without attracting undue attention, ensuring that I had no influence on the behaviour of those present (Robson 2002, 311). Thoughts, feelings and observations were recorded in the 'notes' application

of a smartphone to capture the context and experiences of participants. Secondly, *marginal participation* involved establishing connections with participants. There were times when alcohol was consumed during this role to ensure a 'fit' with the environment, an essential aspect of rapport building during such fieldwork (Thurnell-Read 2011, 39). Thirdly, having established trust, some participants allowed me to spend time with them for periods of participant observation. This required a deeper level of participation, while still being able to ask questions about what is going on (Robson 2002, 317). This was ethically challenging at times, as we were inevitably in proximity to the consumption, sharing and trading of illegal substances. These different types of participation are delineated here for the purposes of clarity. However, in the messy reality of fieldwork they represent a dynamic continuum and it was essential to move between observational strategies as events unfolded.

## Data Collection Method 2: Interviews

While observation is a key source of knowledge within ethnographic research, interviews and everyday exchanges amongst actors can draw out complexity, subtlety and contradictions around drug use (Aldridge, Measham and Williams 2011, 39). This study incorporated 33 semi-structured interviews with individuals and small focus groups. These varied in duration from 30 to 120 minutes. Interviewees (n=56) consisted of 42 tourists (21 males and 21 females) and 13 seasonal workers (8 males and 5 females) aged between 18 and 35 years. A male, Spanish police officer was also interviewed. Workers were employed in various roles associated with the night-time economy, including door security, bar staff, dancers, ticket sellers, and public relations (PR) staff. Interviews were semi-structured, with a series of questions that could be changed around, adapted and added to, depending on the rhythm of the discussion (Bryman 2012, 543). Open questions were used so as not to close down avenues of enquiry. This is consistent with grounded theory, which requires the researcher to avoid preconceptions as far as possible (Bryman 2012, 325). However, I acknowledged that with a career spanning criminology, criminal justice and the mental health profession, approaching the issue of drug use as a 'blank slate' was not possible. Nevertheless, fieldwork was undertaken with a theoretically open mind. The interview questions were inherently intrusive at times due to the focus on illegal drug use. Asking intrusive, deeply personal questions, sometimes after only a few minutes of meeting them, takes considerable interpersonal skill as it breaks the socio-cultural rules that shape everyday interaction. While there is no single, correct way of doing this (Bourgois 1995), it is important to give the issue some thought before entering fieldwork. Furthermore, knowing when *not* to ask taboo questions is equally important; in this respect, ethnographers need to read the complex dynamics of social situations and relationships.

Interviews were ideally conducted in a quiet location, although the ubiquitous music emanating from bars, beaches and hotels often made this difficult. Setting was important in this respect as interviews were recorded. This is a common feature of qualitative interviews, as it is not just *what* people say that is of interest, but the *way* that they say it (Bryman 2012, 329). A password protected voice recorder application on a smartphone was used, with audio files transferred onto a secure and encrypted laptop computer. Brief notes were made after each interview, with thoughts and details about the interviewee, the setting, and potential avenues of interest.





Photo 1. *Hyper-Intoxication in the West End* by Tim Turner.

### Data Collection Method 3: Documentary Photography

Photography has a rich tradition in sociology and has undergone something of a revival in recent years, with researchers striving to illustrate the texture of social life (Ferrell and Van de Vorde 2010, 38). In this study, a total of 580 digital images were captured during fieldwork. In the normative context of tourism, photography represented an unobtrusive form of data collection. Images helped capture a sense of place and identity, two interlinked concepts important to understanding the social world (Spencer 2011). This is exemplified in *Photo 1*, which illustrates the normalisation of hyper-intoxication in Ibiza's infamous West End, the ambivalence of those present juxtaposed against the male lying catatonic in the street. Such images represented a form of data in their own right and contributed to the process of theory generation (Bryman 2012, 313).

### Ethical Issues: Consent

The issue of informed consent implies three principal elements: knowledge and understanding of what is involved; competence to give consent; and voluntary choice (Bryman 2012). These create various ethical challenges in relation to field work focusing

on drug use. In regard to this study, a one-page participant information sheet was produced for interviewees. This explained the aims of the research and outlined the limits of anonymity and confidentiality. Participants' right to withdraw consent was also specified and it was made clear that there was no obligation to answer questions. However, in the early stages of fieldwork, it quickly became apparent that asking for signed consent felt overly-formal and actually acted as a barrier to access. Interview settings were invariably the epitome of 'informal' – the beach, for example – asking for signed consent felt intrinsically out-of-place. A decision was therefore made to gain verbal consent only for the audio-recorded interviews. This was also justified as criminologists have previously been put under legal pressure to disclose signed consent forms (Robson 2002, 69).

The issue of informed consent and intoxication is important to acknowledge when conducting in-situ research. As fieldwork was conducted throughout the 24-hour period, it was inevitable that participants were intoxicated to some degree. Where possible, a participant's telephone number or email address was taken to reaffirm consent a few days after interview. People in extreme states of intoxication were not interviewed. General observations were made in a range of busy public tourist spaces, where it was clearly not possible to obtain consent from everyone present (Gobo 2008, 140). This is common practice in ethnography, which often involves a delicate combination of overt and covert roles (Bourgois 1995). Such semi-overt observations made in public places were stripped of indicators that might reveal individual identity.

### Ethical Issues: Researcher and Participant Safety

Researcher safety is of course a core principle of ethical practice within social research (Botterill and Platenkamp 2012, 75). Fieldwork in the night-time economy is notoriously unpredictable and it is important to maintain an awareness of potential risks in-situ. As Ferrell, Hayward and Young state: 'ethnographic studies generally mix hours of tedium with explosions of surprise and moments of dangerous uncertainty' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2015, 212). An example of the volatile nature of the field is reflected in the excerpt below, relating to a chance meeting with a female worker who I had interviewed a few days earlier.

Ella enthusiastically introduces me to Andy, her 'fiancé' – a term that strikes me as entirely out-of-place in this context – it seems old-fashioned and this man is wired on pills and wearing luminous yellow gloves. As Ella goes to the bar, Andy leans in to me threateningly: 'this research thing, if you fuck me over, I will fuck you up. I will FUCK. YOU. UP.' He's wide-eyed and jabbing a yellow finger in my chest. I try and reassure him, but he's deeply suspicious. I offer him a drink and suggest we sit outside on the terrace. After ten minutes, we're laughing and joking and he's insistent that I come to his villa for dinner (Tim Turner, fieldnotes).

Such moments punctuated fieldwork and as Gobo suggests, ethnographers should 'expect the unexpected' (Gobo 2008, 138). Given that interviews involved discussion about illegal drugs, some people were understandably wary, making it imperative to carry University identification at all times. As fieldwork involved frequent proximity to



drug use and drug dealing, carrying identification and details of the research were also important in terms of potential police attention. Cultural criminologists argue that this entanglement ‘in the experience of criminality and illegality’ (Ferrell and Hamm 1998, 24) is essential to see crime at close range.

As with all social science research, ethnographers have a responsibility to protect participants from harm. The chaotic nature of fieldwork in Ibiza was at times a challenging balance between observation and a perceived need to intervene. This is exemplified below, in relation to an incident outside a club in the early hours.

A young woman is sitting on the floor, clearly very unwell. Her eyes are closed, and her head hangs limply, flopping from side-to-side. Her panic-stricken friend shakes her by the shoulders. I kneel down and her tearful friend tells me they’ve taken *gold leaf* pills [a brand of ecstasy]. I try and get some water into her, but it just dribbles from her mouth. She needs medical assistance, but the friend argues against this, fearful of reprisal. I make the decision for her and two paramedics arrive within minutes (Tim Turner, fieldnotes).

While intervention of this kind clearly oversteps the line of ethnographic observation, there is a *moral obligation to act* when an individual is perceived to be at imminent risk of harm. This is an issue that must be given careful consideration before entering the field. In this instance, it was my *perception* that the person required urgent medical attention and that by failing to act I would be morally culpable. As a result of paramedic intervention, the woman’s condition quickly improved, and they were both grateful for my assistance.

The issue of *confidentiality and anonymity* cannot be over emphasised in regard to drug research (Aldridge, Measham and Williams 2011, 35). Good practice indicates that measures to protect participants’ identity should be taken at the earliest opportunity (Murphy and Dingwall 2007, 341) and as such all participants were given a pseudonym at the time of interview, and irrelevant details were omitted (e.g. place of residence). Tourists frequently referred to feeling a sense of anonymity while on holiday in Ibiza. This seemed to result in openness during interviews. Consequently, participants’ *sense* of anonymity helped overcome the reluctance to discuss the sensitive topics concerned. Data was typed into a secure encrypted laptop computer and stored in a hotel safe. While participants were therefore assured that all possible measures had been instigated to protect their confidentiality, it was also important to convey that absolute guarantees in this area are not possible (Murphy and Dingwall 2007, 341). Moreover, it was important that participants understood the limits of confidentiality. They were informed at the outset that confidentiality could not be maintained in relation to disclosures of criminal offences involving serious harm to others, such as violent assaults, for example.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The aim of this study was to generate theoretical insights into the situated meaning and social processes that underpin illicit drug use and drug dealing within ‘bounded play spaces’ (Turner 2018) of pleasure and excess. Through the process of constructivist grounded theory, a new theoretical explanatory model was constructed around

Bryman's (Bryman 2004) influential framework of *Disneyization* (see Turner 2018). In the limited parameters of this paper, I focus solely on the *performative labour* pillar of this model, with an exploration of the trading and consumption of illicit drugs by British seasonal workers in Ibiza. It is important to consider the experiences of this group as they have received limited academic attention despite occupying a central role as mediators and co-creators of Ibiza's hedonistic atmosphere (Kelly, Hughes and Bellis 2014).

This section has been organised under three key headings. The first section provides an overview of Bryman's construction of *Disneyized performative labour* (Bryman 2004). This demonstrates that while pioneered within Disney theme parks, an element of performance is now a common requirement of many roles within the service industry. The second section applies this conceptualisation to the context of Ibiza. This shows how the line between work and pleasure is quickly eroded as seasonal workers come to theatrically *enact* and *embody* the hedonistic tourist arena (Guerrier and Adib 2003, 1400). Consequently, as with their tourist counterparts, this social group describes a high incidence of illicit drug use. The third section outlines the *transition to drug dealing* that occurs for some seasonal workers, with many financially dependent on this income as a consequence of limited opportunity in the legal economy and through distorted perceptions of risk within the socio-cultural context of the island. This is partially sanctioned by a *performance of control* in Ibiza, with both police and door security often ambivalent (and complicit) to drug use and dealing. As such, seasonal workers in Ibiza and similar nightlife resorts are exposed to health risks associated with prolonged, regular use of drugs such as ecstasy and ketamine, as well as multiple forms of risk associated with involvement in the drug trade.

### Disneyized Performative Labour

*Performative labour* represents a central tenet of Bryman's Disneyization framework (Bryman 2004). Indeed, theatrical terminology is embedded within the Disney Corporation's work environment; thus, employees are cast members operating in front and back stage arenas to 'deliver treasured moments to people around the world' (Disney Careers 2016). Their 'ever-present smiles ... an indication that they too are having fun and that this is not "real" work [all] conveyed through carefully trained attention to posture, facial expression and behaviour' (Bryman 2004, 101). Such performative labour now permeates the contemporary consumer environment. As Pine and Gilmore state, companies now realise that they 'make *memories*, not goods, and create the *stage* for generating greater economic value, not services' (Pine and Gilmore 1999, 100). Consequently, whether you are employed as airline cabin crew or a police officer, a significant aspect of your role is now theatrical performance.

In this respect, those engaged in performative labour are essentially a component of themed space and are required to personify the brand of the company or product. This is a central aspect of employment within a contemporary tourist industry subsumed within the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore 1999). The role of seasonal workers within this industry is essential in the creation of valuable holiday experiences and memories. While this can be projected in a surface-level performance, some tourist workers may engage on a much deeper emotional level (Bryman 2004; Van Dijk, Smith



Photo 2: *Embodied Labour in Ibiza's West End* by Tim Turner

and Cooper 2011). This is a particularly important attribute in regard to experiential tourism, where workers are expected to embody the adventure or excitement of their chosen arena (Beardsworth and Bryman 2001). In regard to this study, fieldwork revealed that for many seasonal workers, the boundary between work and leisure is rapidly eroded as they come to personify Ibiza's hedonistic milieu in a deep level of performance, placing many of them in a pivotal role within the island's flourishing drug scene.

### Disneyized Performative Labour in Ibiza

The seasonal workers who participated in this research were employed in performative labour roles within Ibiza's night-time economy. Some provided formal interviews, while others allowed me to spend significant lengths of time with them during fieldwork. They included bar workers, bouncers, dancers, ticket sellers, and PR staff. Each of these roles can be considered staged performance. The role of bar PR, for example, involves tirelessly enticing passers-by with cut-price alcohol deals. The work requires a determined display of engaging enthusiasm to attain any chance of success, particularly given the fierce competition for custom in the busiest party zones of Ibiza. The embodied nature of this work is illustrated in *Photo 2*, showing a PR worker employed by a well-known club brand.

The performative aspect of those working behind the bar was noted throughout fieldwork. The excerpt below illustrates how the barman transforms the mundane act of buying a round of drinks into a memorable consumer experience (Pine and Gilmore 1999, 52):

The barman, working alone, serves a group of eight raucous women on a hen party. He holds their attention with effortless flirtation and some theatrical cocktail acrobatics. He completes the order in a flourish and then hits them all with a free shot of tequila; he pours one for himself and they chink glasses ostentatiously (Tim Turner, fieldnotes).

This excerpt also demonstrates how the line between work and leisure is often blurred for those engaged in performative labour in the night-time economy. The seasonal workers who participated in this study often echoed similar sentiments to tourists in regard to the value of the experience and memories gained from their time on the island, exemplified here.

When I leave at the end of the season, I'll really miss the atmosphere here. That and the fact that I go out every single night and have a great time. The only commitment I have here is to get drunk and get high (Jack, bar worker).

It's been incredible, but it's exhausting. I work 12 hours a day without a break, for 6 days a week. I go out as much as possible, because it's only for 4 months. I'll look back on this in 10 years with some incredible memories, but it's becoming more and more difficult to function, to work and play (Ella, ticket seller).

The long working hours and incessant all-night partying can make the use of club drugs an essential means of maintaining the pace. In one of the few previous studies carried out, 85.3% of casual workers reported using an illicit drug in Ibiza, with almost half (43.5%) using a drug in Ibiza that they had never used in the UK (Kelly, Hughes and Bellis 2014, 1058). Many of the British seasonal workers in this study were deeply immersed in drug use, and as with previous studies, this seemed to be in excess of their tourist counterparts (Hughes and Bellis 2006), with new arrivals rapidly enmeshed into a tight social network that promotes easy access to illicit drugs. In comparing his time as both a tourist and a seasonal worker, one interviewee stated:

You make really strong friendships with people. And you know where to get good drugs. I suppose that's the main difference between working here for a summer and just coming for a week - you know how to get hold of the best drugs (Jack, bar worker).

Consequently, seasonal workers are exposed to similar drug-related risks as tourists, but over a *much* longer period of time (Kelly, Hughes and Bellis 2014), with a worker's average length of stay 100 days compared to just 7 days for tourists (Hughes, Bellis and Chaudry 2004). The following examples typified many of the workers met during fieldwork:

The whole place [worker accommodation block] is proper mental. All day, every day. It kicks off about 7am after people pile back there from work or going out and basically doesn't stop all day. Ket and pills everywhere (Jack, bar worker).

How many workers use drugs? All of us! Well, *at least* 90 per cent (Nick, bar worker and drug dealer).

I've worked out here for four summers, so I know what goes on with the workers. You wouldn't believe how many drugs they consume, and how little work gets done because they're always smashed out of their fucking heads [laughs]. It's pretty much endemic, and never changes much (John, bar worker).

These excerpts illustrate that the demarcation between seasonal workers and tourists is in many ways blurred, as they are involved in similar patterns of drug use, albeit over contrasting timescales. However, for many workers, there is a transitional point where they move beyond the pleasures of drug consumption and make a decision to start dealing.

### The Transition to Dealing

Almost without exception, the employment opportunities that seasonal workers were engaged in were low paid, commission-based roles, with long hours and no employment rights. Poor working conditions and job insecurity is therefore routinely accepted as the norm amongst casual workers in Ibiza, or as one interviewee succinctly stated:

It's Ibiza. If you didn't like it, you wouldn't be here. You don't come here to be treated nicely at work (Karen, PR Manager).

When such volatile, low paid working conditions are combined with high living costs and a lifestyle built around alcohol and drug use (Kelly, Hughes and Bellis 2014) it can be very difficult for workers to remain in Ibiza for an entire summer. This is especially true when relying on income generated solely within a remarkably unstable and competitive legal economy, as these excerpts demonstrate:

I've seen PRs work 12 hours through the night and get like 10 euro. The manager will give them 50 cents for every customer they get in the bar, but they don't even see half the punters they get in. It's bullshit (Nick, bar worker and drug dealer).

I don't even know if there's a minimum wage out here. I need to find out. This is my fourth shift and I'm not getting paid for any of it. I'm on a trial (Kelly, bar worker).

In a context where a 250ml bottle of water can cost €12, many seasonal workers decide to supplement their income through drug dealing, while others abandon the legal economy altogether and deal drugs as a sole source of finance.



Every other person here is a drug dealer. It starts off every other person is a ticket seller, and then after about three or four weeks, every other person is a drug dealer. It's an easy way to make money. You take ten, fifteen, twenty pills out in your pocket. You make between two and three hundred euros straight up (Ella, ticket seller).

A lot of people come out here to work and don't anticipate how hard it is. There are so many ticket sellers around and most are on commission only. When they can't pay the rent they just start dealing, because it's easy and no one really cares (Karen, PR Manager).

The pull of the illegal economy in Ibiza is exemplified by Nick, a bar worker and drug dealer who I spent protracted time with over different periods of fieldwork. Nick was 22 years old, well-educated and from the leafy suburbs of a large UK city. His parents were both in professional roles and were oblivious to his lifestyle in Ibiza. He had worked on the island for three consecutive summers and was employed as a barman in a busy venue. He had been supplementing his income by dealing ecstasy on each of the summers he had worked there. As the following field note illustrates, the transactional process of dealing is often pre-arranged and fast:

Late afternoon and I meet Nick for a drink before he starts work. Before we find a bar, he says he needs to meet a British tourist to sell some pills. He's carrying 50 *rock-stars* [ecstasy pills], with half stashed in a take-away Coca-Cola cup and half in an empty cigarette packet. Although carrying this quantity could land Nick in a Spanish prison for 4 years, he seems relaxed and in good humour. As we talk, he sees his man, a British lad in his early 20s, and shakes him by the hand. After a brief conversation, Nick passes him the paper cup and then the cigarette packet, and we say goodbye. A few minutes later, sitting in the sun with a couple of beers, Nick takes a sip and tells me he's just made €250 (Tim Turner, field notes).

Fieldwork revealed that for many of the seasonal workers in Ibiza, there is a remarkably blasé attitude to dealing drugs such as ecstasy, with a perception that the risk of legal sanction is relatively low in the normalised play spaces of the island.

My friends here haven't got jobs. They just make money from selling drugs (Kelly, bar worker).

No one forced me to sell drugs, but it was an easy option and as long as you're not completely stupid, there's zero chance of getting caught. It's just knocking out pills and no one cares (Rob, tourist, discussing his previous summer in Ibiza as a worker).

Bouncers don't really search you at all. I've walked in with pills in my bag. They'll open the main bit and have a quick glance, that's it. I've taken 50 pills into venues before. Literally had them clenched between my arse cheeks, walk in, sound! I mean us three don't look like drug dealers, do we? Stick 'em in your hair as well. That works (Sam, drug dealer).



Two friends of mine were looking to score some gear. It's about 10am and they're walking past Ket Castle [ketamine-related slang term for a worker accommodation block] hear all the music and think, 'there's a party going on, they'll have stuff'. They go inside, find the room with the music and the door is *wide* open. They just walk in and ask to buy a few pills. The people in there are *off their faces*, they pull out this bag from under the coffee table and it's got about 5000 pills in it! I mean how fucking dumb is that? The door was wide open! They think 'oh it's Ibiza, it's fine! We can do what we like, we're untouchable' (Christopher, bouncer).

These excerpts reveal the ambivalence of some seasonal workers in regard to drug dealing. The differentially normalised space on the island effectively distorts risk perception in relation to the myriad of potential harms associated with dealing illegal substances. This subjective perception is however objectively augmented by the apparent laissez-faire attitude of both police officers and bouncers at venues within the night-time economy. In this sense, such controllers are also engaged in *performative labour*; that is the bounded play spaces of Ibiza are characterised by the *performance of control*, with fieldwork revealing narratives of police corruption, and door security that is at best ambivalent to drug use, and at worst complicit. As one tourist disclosed:

I never even bother hiding it [from door security]. I just hold it in my hands. The first night we went to [venue]. One of the bouncers caught us doing ket [starts laughing]. He takes the bag off me and just empties it over my head (Jed, tourist).

The performative nature of security can be seen in *Photo 3*. The photograph of this imposing military-style uniform was taken at the infamously chaotic Bora Bora beach. Despite the relatively open selling and consumption of drugs in this location, there was no attempt at intervention by security staff, who remained ambivalent to the trading of drugs going on around them.

This is further illustrated in the excerpt below in a conversation with two workers, John and Sam. The latter was a well-educated 19-year old male from the north of England. He was in Ibiza for the summer and was planning to go to University in September. Although he had intended to get a bar job, he had been unable to find stable work and consequently relied exclusively on drug dealing for his income. He also used ketamine himself on several occasions each week:

Sam (drug dealer): I've been told not to carry more than 5 pills if you're dealing around the West End. I know someone who got caught with 12 and they got let off. I've never seen door security search anyone. Even in the big clubs, they'd just take it off you, chuck you out, and then sell it themselves.

John (bar worker): I know for a fact that door security sell at certain clubs.

Sam (drug dealer): I was in [venue] the other day and I'd got a gram of ket. I couldn't see. I was off my face. This doorman walks up, opens my hand and



takes the ket off me. I don't know why, but I just gave him a 20 euro note and he gave me the ket back and let me stay in!

This *performance of security* was illustrated in an interview with a British seasonal worker working in various venues as a bouncer. In his account, we again see the erosion of the demarcation between work and leisure:

Christopher (bouncer): British security are different to Spanish, we work completely differently. We're a lot more laid back. We're here for the same reason, to work and to enjoy ourselves, so we want tourists to enjoy it too. When I was working on the boat party, I'd got some guys on there doing M-Cat [slang term for mephedrone, a synthetic stimulant]. I watched them roll it up and crush it. It was so obvious. If I was a dickhead, I'd have walked over and took it off them. I just went up and said, 'mate, do me a favour, just hold it down and don't be so fucking blatant'.

Photo 3. *Performance of Control at Bora Bora Beach* by Tim Turner

Tim (author): And is that the way you generally approach drug use in clubs?

Christopher (bouncer): Yeah, I saw someone dealing in a club I was working in last week. He looked at me and I said, 'mate, don't be a dick, if you're gonna do that, go in the fucking crowd where I can't see you. Don't stand next to the fucking toilet in the middle of everywhere. If I see you doing it again, I'll take all your money and drugs off you.

Interestingly, a Spanish Police Officer, imparted the following information in regard to the application of different rules within the context of Ibiza and mainland Spain.

Tim (author): How do you distinguish between dealing and possession for ecstasy pills?

Police Officer: Up to 30 or 40 pills here [shrugs], we take them [the person] away [to the police station] and just fill in the forms. They get a fine. It's not a big problem. More than that, it's serious. Last year I caught a British boy with 100 pills. He went to prison for four years. On the mainland it's different. There, 5 is a problem.

Despite such approaches to policing, there's little doubt that as participants redefine boundaries of acceptable behaviour, they risk serious legal sanction. This is evident in a case in 2010, when twenty British drug dealers were arrested in a joint operation between British and Spanish police. The arrests included four British PR staff, seasonal workers much like the participants in this study. Ken Gallagher, of Britain's Serious Organised Crime Agency summarised the arrests with the following warning:

This joint operation has taken out every level of a gang that was responsible for supplying and distributing a vast quantity of drugs to Ibiza. It represents an excellent result for our co-operation with the Spanish and serves as a stark warning to students and others who might think they can make some easy money through the drugs trade. These arrests could have significant impact on their future, on their ability to finish their degrees and on their prospects for employment (Tremlett and Topping 2010).

This operation is by no means unique; recent years have seen a 30% increase in arrests of British tourists and workers in Ibiza, with detainees facing up to four years in a Spanish prison before facing trial (Kelsey 2012). The British seasonal workers in Ibiza are therefore exposed to significant risk on multiple levels. They are ultimately targeted by powerful groups eager to exploit their shifting perceptions of risk and well-established immersion in the local drug scene.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has illustrated some of the key methodological processes and challenges associated with conducting ethnographic research with drug users and drug dealers acting in the chaotic party spaces of Ibiza. It is hoped that these insights will be useful to scholars with an interest in engaging in ethnographic drug research in other 'bounded play spaces' (Turner 2018), such as music festivals and the many other examples of wild-zone tourist resorts. The study has demonstrated that performative labour, a central pillar of Bryman's *Disneyization* framework (Bryman 2004), is evident in the party spaces of Ibiza. For the majority of the British seasonal workers featured in this study, their experience on the island will leave them with the kind of treasured memories and stories that are so highly valued by late-modern 'sensation gatherers' (Bauman 1997, 146). However, ethnographic immersion has clearly illustrated significant changes in drug-related behaviour amongst British seasonal workers, and the potential harm associated with such changes is very real. There is a clear escalation in drug use amongst those already using similar drugs in the UK, while the combination of drugs used by many workers, along with high levels of alcohol consumption is also a factor that many experienced ecstasy users widely acknowledge as a dangerous practice (Hunt et al 2009, 495). Furthermore, like tourists, workers describe using drugs for the first time in Ibiza. This is an issue that has been highlighted in previous research, with negative outcomes compounded by being away from both informal and formal support structures as well as language barriers and lack of familiarity with health care and criminal justice procedures (Bellis et al 2009). This paper also makes a contribution to our understanding of the risks that seasonal workers are exposed to in relation to drug dealing, including violence associated with organised crime and from serious legal sanctions. The combination of risk factors makes this social group an ideal target for

innovative harm reduction measures, especially given the island's entrenched cultural position as the global capital of electronic dance music.

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